



# CURATING AND INTERPRETING CULTURE WITH AI: EMERGING ROLE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN ENHANCING CULTURAL EXPRESSIONS

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## ABSTRACT

Cultural Studies as an interdisciplinary field is emerging with the developments in the digital era and methods of cultural curation evolve with the evolution of technology. Artificial Intelligence is not about the future, but the reality of the hour, and the immense possibilities of AI can be explored in the dawn of twenty-first century for better cultural curation. Along with proper curation, archiving and interpretation, cultural expressions can be made more efficient with the possibilities of AI tools, language translators, chatbots, Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality. As a brilliant method of cultural inquiry, AI tools, irrespective of their factual errors and lack of precision, can save time in cultural curation and help provide self-sufficiency to cultural explorers. The advancements in AI can be further used in the tourism and travel industry by documenting, promoting and projecting culture. Augmented Reality and Virtual reality can be brilliantly utilized for interpreting cultural shocks, nuances and subtle aspects of culture by crossing the borders of language barriers resulting in the exploration of complexities. Providing interactive cultural experiences leads to public engagement with different cultures and the celebration of cultural inclusivity is a major aspect of AI in Cultural Studies.

**KEYWORDS:** Cultural Curation, Cultural Shocks, Augmented Reality, Virtual Reality, Self- Sufficiency

## INTRODUCTION

Culture is crucial and integral to any society or community. Factors like customs, practices, lifestyle, food, and beliefs play crucial role in the establishment of culture. Hot and loud debates are going on regarding the term 'culture' and its political implications became more evident with the emergence of Cultural Studies as a promising discipline. Even politics behind terms like 'cultureless' are being discussed with the developments and progress in the field of Cultural Studies and the interdisciplinarity of Cultural Studies sheds light on complex concepts associated with the nuances and subtle aspects of culture.

Cultural Curation is a key concept in Cultural Studies that points to the efficient documentation of culture focusing on immersive and participatory experiences. It focuses on the imminent need to preserve and highlight culture and is crucial in exploring diverse cultures. In contemporary society, curation encompasses a broader range of activities, including digital curation, social participation, and the integration of diverse perspectives. The cultural shock associated with certain practices is brought to the forefront and familiarized to the mainstream through proper cultural expressions. "Curation could be a way of cultural inquiry to explore the current cultural phenomenon" (Gao). The term curation was earlier more associated with fields like artworks, museums, galleries, heritage shows, etc. and now it has close connections with cultural documentation. The role of the curator transformed in the dawn of twenty-first century and the term was earlier used to point to the role played by persons behind the curtain. "The curator has gone from being a behind-the-scenes organizer and selector to a visible, centrally

important cultural producer" (Neill). The transformations that happened in the role of curators are evident from recent studies and research and the curators now play an important role in cultural documentation and interpretation. "The role of the curator has expanded from merely preserving and displaying art to interpreting cultural phenomena and creating thematic exhibitions that reflect contemporary society" (Gao). The term curation simply means selecting, organizing and presenting any content in a meaningful manner and Cultural Curation is an effective method to meaningfully document and highlight culture. Paul O' Neill in his seminal work *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Cultures* discusses the challenges faced by cultural curators and the complexities associated with cultural curation. Existing biases, prejudices and subjective approaches influence the process of curation and the need to be more vigilant in the curatorial job is well explained in the work.

There are different methods for Cultural Curation; both conventional and advanced. The conventional methods include curatory shows, heritage projects, cultural centers, travel literature and many more. All these methods focus on in-depth and detailed documentation of culture. On the other hand, advanced or modern methods focus on Digital curation and mainly vlogging, crowdsourcing and the possibilities of Artificial Intelligence tools with a participatory approach. Digital curation and its pivotal role in cultural heritage support diverse disciplinary communities and organizations by coordinating initiatives for access to digital data, but its role and implementation in institutions require further reflection. "A radical shift in the institution's received practices can serve as a vehicle for togetherness, enabling visitors to become active

agents and transforming curating into an inclusive practice, possibly opening new spaces for thought and action in the process of democratizing art and culture”(Nikonanou).

“Several studies demonstrate that the use of new and combined media enhances how culture is experienced. The benefit is in terms of both the number of people who can have access to knowledge and the quality of the diffusion of the knowledge itself” (Bekele). The advancements in Artificial Intelligence brought in a revolution in all aspects of life. “Artificial Intelligence technology is one of the most innovative inventions that have revolutionized various industries all around the globe” (Samala). Though Artificial Intelligence is not a new term, Generative AI has stolen the floor recently. Generative AI is greatly used in creative and cultural domains, significantly impacting how cultural artifacts are created, understood, and curated

The role played by AI tools in cultural curation is tremendous today. “Rapidly, AI’s footprint is expanding in a greater number of industries all across the globe with each passing day” (sites.tcs.com, 2019, p. 6). Every day, new technologies are evolving in the domain of Artificial Intelligence. Providing valuable insights and outlook on culture is therefore a major aspect of AI. “In the digitalized era, Artificial Intelligence technology is being used in various industries and not just the Information Technology industry. Artificial Intelligence has reached a climax, and it has the potential to have a profound impact on individuals, organizations, and industries to a significant extent” (Nagaraj, 2019, 2020). AI tools can be used to gather data and valuable information on the cultural aspects, practices and lifestyles of various communities. Tools like ChatGPT, Gemini AI, Meta AI, Perplexity, Consensus, etc. can be easily accessed and are used to gather data with different perspectives on multiple cultural communities. Various studies, research, suggestions and findings on a particular community or society are explained in detail by these tools after proper analysis and assessment. Also, images and videos of various cultural societies and communities that are less familiar can be generated through platforms like Midway and Dall E- 2. Deep Art and My Heritage are platforms used for the digital restoration of cultural content and platforms like Unity play an imminent role in systematically preserving culture. New trends and patterns associated with culture can also be analyzed with the help of these AI tools.

The use of chatbots, Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality plays a crucial role in documenting the culture and it has impeccable impacts in the cultural industry. “Research provides evidence about developing VR and AR tools that can act as internationalization facilitators when it comes to cultural industry”(Kargas). Augmented reality with its innovative storytelling techniques helps in the better understanding of cultural artefacts and especially in cross-border and cross-cultural exchanges. “The virtual world experience enhances people’s awareness of the culture. This new medium, VR, allows for participants to be immersed in the culture in ways that are not possible through the use of other media”(Abokhoza). Virtual reality technologies are perfect gateways to travel &

explore unseen locations beforehand. “Marketers provide the virtual journey to the customers into the hotels & tourism spots by partnering themselves with the hotels, tourism spots (i.e. museums, zoo parks & all other recreational spots)”(Jung et al., 2016; Jung et al., 2017). Exposure to different cultures with more engaging aspects is the trend of the present. “Co-curation initiatives, such as ‘Together We Curate,’ aim to democratize art and culture by enabling visitors to become active agents in the curatorial process, promoting inclusivity and collective participation”(Luciniea). The great and revolutionary impact AI could bring in is in the tourism sector.

Ethical concerns are always raised along with developments in AI and this scenario is frequently discussed. Data protection and confidentiality are significant issues in the use of AI for interpreting culture. “The application of AI in cultural heritage must adhere to ethical principles such as Shared Responsibility, Meaningful Participation, Explainability, Accessibility, Sustainability, Reliability, and Dignity. These principles help ensure that AI technologies do not compromise the values, significance, and social impact of cultural heritage”(Pansoni). Therefore, ethical guidelines are necessary to ensure the responsible use of AI in sensitive cultural contexts. The machines like chatbots are only limited to answering simple questions. These technologies use the keywords in the questions to provide the answers. When there is an emergency & complex issue to be sorted out, the customers still rely on the human workforce (Lommatzsch, 2018). Misrepresenting certain cultures through bias or subjectivity in AI is also an issue. But still, the immense possibilities of AI in the promotion of culture will act as a game-changer. The factual errors and lack of precision of AI is also a matter of grave concern.

AI tools also help in improvising storytelling techniques by providing engaging aspects with both audio-visual elements. This is beneficial for learners and cultural explorers to gain a better understanding of diverse cultures. It also provides self-sufficiency for cultural explorers by providing in-depth knowledge about a particular cultural group. Providing more knowledge rooted in experience is beneficial for cultural explorers and travelers and this possibility will enhance travel aptitude. Giving exposure to diverse cultures with different perspectives will be a great step towards inclusivity and AI is thus revolutionizing the cultural industry with its immense possibilities.

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